Chapter 12

'Go Home to Your Country!' – Everyday Racism in a Rural Lower Secondary School

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This chapter explores ninth grade students' experiences and understanding of everyday racism in a rural lower secondary school in Sweden. Focus of our analysis is the narratives and situations that revolve around incidents when students are exposed to racist comments and positioned as *the Other*. The results indicate that immigrant students, regardless of gender, were exposed to racist and degrading comments due to their immigrant background or the colour of their skin. Boys with immigrant background were also exposed to physical violence. According to the students it is a particular group of male students at the investigated school that exposes immigrant students to different forms of degrading and racist comments. The micro-aggressions expressed by the racist comments and also the physical violence directed to the immigrant students had a great impact on their well-being in school.

Introduction

> Structures of racism do not exist external to agents – they are made by agents – but specific practices are by definition racist only when they activate existing structural inequality in the system. (Essed, 2002, p. 181)

This quotation from the Dutch researcher Philomena Essed has been chosen to introduce this chapter it highlights the essence of everyday systemic racism. In the current chapter we will explore how racism is expressed in the everyday life of a Swedish rural school.

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Children's and young people's discussions about differences between different groups are not taking place in isolation. Rather, their discussions have to be understood in the light of existing social discourses and social structures within the dominant culture as well as within minority cultures (Miller, 2015). Existing social structures in the society create a foundation for children's and young people's identity, as well as images of other children and young people and how they are positioned. Children's and young people's identity constructions, social experiences and negotiations at the micro level are part of a wider context where history – through, for example, white people's colonialism of different parts of the world – still has vital importance in terms of how the different faces of racism are expressed in people's everyday lives (Hällgren, 2005; Miller, 2015; Isik-Ercan, 2015).

Looking at contemporary studies in the field of education, research indicates that white privilege still dominates in schools. Myers and Bhopal's (2017) study conducted in two primary schools in rural England indicates that racist behaviour was not considered to be a problem within the schools. Although everyday racism was understood as a priority on the public and political agendas, this issue became irrelevant and even ignored by school officials, Myers and Bhopal conclude. Also, studies conducted in urban areas, which dominate the research field, indicate that white privilege is prevalent in schools. Contemporary Norwegian educational research indicates that Muslim girls often face different stereotypical notions about their choice of lifestyle (Jacobsen, 2011; Roth & Stuedahl, 2017). Quite often these notions are related to the idea that Muslim girls have less freedom, and have fewer opportunities in life, compared to girls with a majority background.

The construction of the Other has also been revealed in contemporary Swedish research. The findings of Odenbring and Johansson's (2019b) study conducted in a lower secondary school in rural Sweden indicates how students with immigrant background were positioned as the Other and exposed to everyday racism by the students with majority background. The findings reveal that Muslim girls were a particularly vulnerable group, especially girls wearing a veil. Muslim girls expressed how they were exposed to degrading comments due to their religion and choice of clothing, which had a great impact on their well-being in school. The construction of the Other was also expressed through degrading comments to the effect that immigrant students smelled bad and had strange eating habits. At the investigated school, everyday racism was most present and clearly a part of the local school culture among the majority students. Similarly, boys with Muslim background are also often positioned as the Other. Contemporary research describes how Muslim boys are positioned as the Other by professionals in schools as well as by the public opinion due to their religious background (cf. Hopkins, 2014; Jaffe-Walter, 2019; Lundberg, 2015; Welply, 2018). In many European countries, immigrant boys, and particularly Muslim boys, have come to be synonymous with the rowdy, violent and dangerous boys in school and in the society (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2013; Kryger, 2015; Milani & Jonsson, 2012).

Welply's (2018) study of a culturally diverse primary school in England reveals how students with Muslim background were positioned as the 'bad Other'. The Muslim students were not only passive recipients of degrading comments and

Islamophobia, they demonstrated what Welply refers to as 'discursive agency' by displaying resistance and creating more positive representations of Otherness. The discrimination of Muslim students, Welply argues, raises several questions about multiculturalism in schools and how to create and work towards a more tolerant, inclusive and understanding school environment. As Welply argues, 'At a time where "the Other" in Britain is being defined through discourses of islamophobia, assimilation and securitisation, it becomes urgent to help teachers and children develop the tools to re-frame discussions around Otherness in more critical ways' (p. 386).

Even schools that are supposed to be working for a more inclusive school environment tend to reproduce normative understandings of the 'ideal' citizen and the 'ideal' pupil. Jaffe-Walter's (2019) ethnographic case study of a progressive Danish lower secondary school indicates how the teachers at the investigated school, despite the school's vision of 'openness', inclusion, respect and individualism, created and established a colour-blind discourse of non-racism in their teaching. The results indicate that the vision of openness did not include Muslim students and their attachment to their religious and cultural identity.

Similar findings have been recognized in studies conducted in pre-primary education. Hellman and Odenbring's (2017) ethnographic case study of a progressive preschool in a culturally diverse area of a small town in Sweden describes how the preschool's vision of inclusive education and pedagogy instead led to everyday racism towards Muslim boys. The study shows that the head of the preschool as well as the preschool teachers referred to the boys with Muslim background as problematic and rowdy. Bilingual children were also told not to speak their mother tongue in the preschool due to the preschool teachers' belief that the children [the boys] were talking about inappropriate things. Also, the parents of Muslim children were referred to as problematic and were discussed as being backward and lacking in their understanding of gender equality. The professionals expressed that it was important to teach the parents about Swedish values and traditions. Similar tendencies and developments can also be recognized on a wider societal level in several Western countries. For instance, contemporary Dutch research indicates how Muslims are referred to in political discussions as illiterate, backward, patriarchal and unemancipated (de Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2014). Contemporary research suggests that, after 9/11, cultural violence based on gendered and racially inscribed imaginings about Muslims and veiled women has become an everyday phenomenon and one of the most visible forms of racism in most European countries (Essed & Hoving, 2014). There are also researchers who suggest that racism against people of African descent in Europe is currently taking even more open and blunt forms (Essed, 2013).

The number of educational studies conducted in Swedish rural areas is still limited, and hopefully this study can help to fill this gap (cf. Beach et al., 2019; Odenbring, 2019; Odenbring & Johansson, 2019a, b). In this chapter, we will address students' views and experiences of everyday racism in a rural lower secondary school (grades 7–9) in Sweden. Drawing on interviews with students in the ninth grade, this chapter aims to explore students' experiences of everyday racism and how the students exposed to this form of harassment understand these situations. Everyday racism is a quite subtle and difficult object to study. Given this, we have chosen to focus on the narratives and situations that revolve around incidents when students are exposed to racist comments and positioned as *the Other*. It is the narrative and discursive construction of *the Other* that will be the focus of this chapter (cf. van Dijk, 1992, 1999; Essed, 2013).

The chapter draws from interviews with ninth-grade students at a lower secondary school named Amber School [Bärnstensskolan in Swedish], conducted in February 2019. All interviews have been conducted and analysed by the first author of this chapter. Focus group interviews were conducted during the initial phase of the study, and interviews were later conducted with pairs and individuals selected from the focus groups. During the interviews, it was important to enable students to tell their stories and to express their experiences of different aspects of cultural diversity and everyday racism at school (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). All interviews have been audio recorded and fully transcribed. To ensure confidentiality, the names of all the participants as well as the name of the school in this chapter have been anonymized (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). This work was supported by the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (grant number 2017–00071).

Everyday and Entitlement Racism

During the second half of the last century racism became more subtle (i.e. ‘less in your face’) in Western societies (Essed & Hoving, 2014, p. 9). However, biological notions of ‘race’ never disappeared; it was and still is most present in the society. Today, in the twenty-first century, we can see that offensive representations of the Other are bluntly expressed across Europe. Throughout Europe, racism and extremism have increased considerably, with cases of antisemitism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and violence targeting people of African descent being reported in the news on a daily basis. Also, national groups and national political parties have become more visible and are also receiving more support from the public throughout Europe. As a result, open racism has become acceptable again (Essed & Hoving, 2014). Today it is not uncommon to hear someone say, ‘I do not want to be racist, but’… (Essed, 2013, p. 62). According to Essed, the ‘war on terror’ post 9/11, in Europe and the US, started the backlash against anti-racism. This backlash has fed a boldness and legitimized racist comments where ‘telling the truth’ and ‘speaking your mind’ have become more or less normalized. Essed (2013) refers to the phenomenon of the majority’s claimed right to offend ethnic minorities as *entitlement racism*:

> Entitlement racism is a sign of the times we live in, where it is believed that you should be able to express yourself publicly in whichever way you feel like. Freedom of expression, though an individual right, is quintessentially a relational phenomenon. The expresser wants his or her opinion to be heard or seen. Followers, those who applaud, and even those

> whose silence is read as approval, can become involved in the enactment of entitlement racism. Freedom of expression as a form of racism evolves easily into the idea that one has the right to *offend and to humiliate* [Italics in original quote by Essed]. (Essed, 2013, p. 62)

Everyday racism integrates macro- and micro-sociological dimensions of racism (Essed, 1991, 2002; Rocco et al., 2014; Walton et al., 2013). It also transcends the distinction between institutional and individual racism. To maintain racism, it is necessary to cultivate ideologies that support the idea of innate group differences. This inevitably leads to the construction of 'us' and 'them'. Everyday racism is often expressed through perceptions of cultural differences (Essed, 1991, 2002). This means that language, clothes, style, taste and other cultural attributes can be used to categorize people into different 'races'. Essed (2013) refers to this in the following way: 'At the core of racism is the humiliation of the 'other' in order to elevate the self. But the very humiliation of the other compromises the dignity of the perpetrator' (p. 74). Similarly, Kohli and Solórzano (2012) argue that everyday systemic racism is used to keep those at the racial margins in their place, and that everyday systemic racism could include: (1) subtle verbal and non-verbal insults directed to people in the minority position; (2) insults/assaults, based on, for instance, a person's race and immigration status and (3) cumulative insults/assaults. The effects of such repeated racial micro-aggressions can be profound. Kohli and Solórzano (2012) continue by arguing that 'If a child goes to school and reads textbooks that do not reference her culture /…/, and perhaps does not hear her home language, the mispronunciation of her name is an additional example for that student that who they are and where they come from is not important' (p. 445).

Everyday life takes place in the individual's immediate environment, but also through mediated experiences. Everyday racism cannot be reduced to incidents or specific events. Instead, it is discernible through multiple acts, situations and relations in everyday life (Levine-Rasky, 2013). Following Essed (1991), everyday racism is heterogeneous in its manifestations, but also structured into uniformity. It operates through complex class and gender relations, producing 'race'. This form of racism also varies depending on, for example, national and local differences. Although there are similar patterns, there are also variations in how racism is enacted in, for example, different geographical areas. If we agree on the definition of everyday racism, then we can reformulate the problem of racism as an everyday problem. Racism is thus integrated into the very mechanisms, routines and fabric of everyday life. Everyday racism must, therefore, be analysed carefully, using detailed accounts of attitudes and behaviour in everyday life. We need to focus on routinized and repeated expressions of difference, related to the power enacted by certain dominant and often 'white' groups. Whiteness and the construction of a privileged position is produced, regulated, and conveyed through repetition, parodic statements, corporeal enactments and labelling processes (Levine-Rasky, 2013). As for the present study, we use the concept of *everyday racism* to analyse how racism is shaped in the everyday life in school as described in the interviewed students' narratives (cf. Essed, 2002, 2013; Rocco et al., 2014; Walton et al., 2013).

Everyday Racism in a Rural Swedish School

Before we present the results, we will first present the school and the community in which the interviews have been conducted. Thereafter we will present the analysis of the data and how it is organized and presented. Amber school is located in the rural community of Granberget, which has approximately 3000 inhabitants. Amber School enrols approximately 400 students and is the only lower secondary school in Granberget municipality. The catchment area of the school covers the entire municipality, which includes Granberget village as well as the surrounding smaller villages. Granberget and Granberget municipality have a long tradition of small-scale businesses, predominately manufacturing industries, and there are good railway connections to other parts of the region and other parts of the country. Similar to other rural areas in Sweden, the education level in Granberget is lower than the national average. Also, the proportion of inhabitants born abroad is lower than the national average of 20%; approximately 10% of the inhabitants of Granberget are born abroad (Statistikmyndigheten SCB, 2019).

The data presented in the current chapter is based on thematic data analysis. By reading the transcripts multiple times we have been able to identify recurrent patterns in the data material and define and name the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). During this analytic process three broad themes were discerned, and the results section will be organized and presented according to these main themes: (1) Being a newcomer, (2) Not feeling welcome and (3) Fighting back. We will first unpack the scope of how students at the school discuss and reflect on being a newcomer at the school. In the next two sections, we will unpack the results of how students with immigrant background experience everyday life in school and how everyday racism is expressed. In the concluding section we will highlight the main results of this chapter, and in the final section we will discuss how schools can find ways to work proactively to prevent everyday racism in schools.

Being a Newcomer

During the interviews the students' narratives revealed that newcomers and students in the minority position were in a particularly vulnerable situation in the school. A recurring theme in the students' responses was their description of a particular group of students who were seen as troublemakers; they were referred to as the 'pack group'. This group of students consisted mainly of boys who recurrently victimized minority students, mocking different students during the school day. This was something that a group of boys, with both majority and immigrant backgrounds, discussed during one of the focus group interviews.

> Hugo: These people hate everything and everyone. They just want to make trouble.
> Interviewer: Okay, so there is a certain group of students who want trouble?

Hilding: Yes.
Hugo: Yes, they hate everything and everyone /…/.
Omed: They were mocking me and stuff like that.
Interviewer: Did they beat you, or what?
Omed: They didn't beat me, but we were fighting with each other. That happened all the time in seventh and eighth grade. /…/.
Interviewer: What do they do to create trouble? Do they come up to you and mock you?
Hugo: They do whatever they want, they yell at people in the school corridors. (Focus group interview)

According to the students, the pack group is a group of students who are responsible for most of the trouble that occurs within the school. Also, the general opinion among the students interviewed in this study was that this group of students is rowdy and that they misbehave and litter. The difficulties of being a newcomer and the challenges newcomers have to face were also raised by a group of girls, all with majority background, during one of the focus group interviews.

Interviewer: What do you think it is like to move here from another country?
Tora: I think it is really hard, because you not only have to learn a new language, but people might also laugh at you when you try to communicate with other students. Your parents might be dead and then other students say 'go home to your home country'.
Matilda: That is so disrespectful.
Tora: I think they feel really bad when they get comments like that. I think they are really grateful that they got the opportunity to come here [to Sweden].
Interviewer: How do you react when you hear students shout 'go home to your home country'?
Matilda: I am disgusted.
Tora: Yes, me too.
Matilda: If someone crosses the line, I talk to a teacher or our school host. (Focus group interview)

Regardless of their ethnic background, the students talk about the vulnerability that immigrant students are exposed to by the pack group. Students in the majority position also express their concern about the immigrant students' position and the harassment they are exposed to. In the next two sections we will focus on the narratives of immigrant students and how they experience everyday life in school.

Not Feeling Welcomed

Students with immigrant background at the school revealed that they are recurrently exposed to everyday racism in school. Several of these students indicated that they were subjected to comments about not being wanted in Sweden. One of the students was Omed, who came to Sweden with his family from Kurdistan[1] when he was in the sixth grade. His story reveals that he has experienced degrading and racist comments from the so-called pack group more or less from day one at school.

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[1] We use Omed's self-definition of his home country, i.e. Kurdistan. The area of Kurdistan covers parts of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey.

> Omed: They call me immigrant /…/ They call me gay and stuff like that, although I'm not, they call me negro and things like that, and when they say bad words, I get really angry. /…/ They say bad things about my family.
>
> Interviewer: Okay, what kinds of things do they say then?
>
> Omed: Like 'I'm gonna fuck your mom' ['jag ska knulla din mamma' in Swedish[2]] and things like that. Fuck, then I get really angry. (Focus group interview)

Also, when reflecting upon previous years in school, Omed's story is filled with racist comments and it also reveals how students with majority background recurrently try to provoke him.

> Omed: In the eighth grade it was the same thing; at that time it was also students in the ninth grade who were mocking me. When they were mocking me they called for other people and stuff like that.
>
> Interviewer: So, there were several people who were mocking you? What did they call you?
>
> Omed: Immigrant, go home to your country, your fucking country. (Individual interview)

Hussein, who is of Syrian origin, has similar experiences. At the time of the interviews he had been living in Sweden for 3 years. He and his family fled Syria and came to Sweden in 2015, when approximately 50.000 Syrian refugees were seeking asylum in Sweden (Statistikmyndigheten SCB, 2016). Due to his immigrant background he been exposed to racist comments, threats and physical violence both in school and in the youth centre that is located in the school building.

> Hussein: I was at the entrance outside the youth centre and then two guys came up to me, and I asked the tall one if he had seen my bicycle. Then the other guy shouted fucking gay, fucking Negro, fucking Arab, I'm going to beat you so bad, I'm going to kill you! I just smiled back at him, and like I don't see you, and when I walked away he hit me in the back of my head so I got red bruises /…/ He is so hate-filled and it is the same thing with his parents. A teacher told me that the school had talked to his parents and they have similar views, like racism, racist thinking, you know.
>
> Interviewer: Okay?
>
> Hussein: He is so hate-filled, you know.
>
> Interviewer: With views like that, yes. So, did they talk to his parents?
>
> Hussein: Yes, I think they managed to get in touch with his parents and the supervisor of the youth centre called the police and filed a report. After that the guy wasn't allowed to come to school for two months, I think.
>
> Interviewer: Okay, so he was expelled from school?
>
> Hussein: Yes. (Individual interview)

The boys' stories are framed by racist comments and physical violence, but their stories also reveal homophobic name-calling by being called 'gay'. This form of name-calling could be understood in the light of opposition and position the boys as marginalized (cf. Kimmel, 2001; Pascoe, 2013). Following Kimmel (2001), boys and men take part in different forms of homosocial enactments to maintain the status of manhood (see also Chap. 5, this volume). One way to maintain this status is by insulting groups positioned as minorities, for instance, racial minorities, or by directing insults to women or sexual minorities. Following Pascoe (2013), homophobic insults are also used by boys to police other boys to ensure that they behave in ‘the right way’ and to maintain heterosexual masculinity.

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[2] This form of insult is not meant literally, but the insult has a strong symbolic meaning. Compared to most cultures around the world, verbal insults connected to someone's mother are not traditionally part of the Swedish language. This form insult has been influenced by other cultures.

Girls with immigrant background also reveal that they have been exposed to everyday racism in school. Similar to Omed and Hussein, Ubah, a girl with Somali background, talked about the different forms of racist comments that she has been exposed to in school. At the time of the interview Ubah had been living in Sweden for 5 years. When she came to Sweden with her family in the fifth grade, and when she began school, she was illiterate.

> Interviewer: What was it like to come to Sweden and to attend school?
>
> Ubah: At first it was quite good. The first year in school I attended the introduction class to learn Swedish so there were no Swedish students in that class. A year later I began an ordinary class with Swedish students and then the bullying began. The other students bullied me because I was from another country and because my Swedish was poor.
>
> Interviewer: Did they bully you because you are wearing a veil?
>
> Ubah: No, not because of that, but they bullied me because of the colour of my skin. They called me the N-word. (Individual interview)

Currently in lower secondary school, Ubah expresses that she likes school much better, her Swedish has improved and she has several friends that she hangs out with. Despite this, her story reveals that the racist comments continued for some time. Also, in Ubah’s case, it is the so-called pack group that has been exposing her to different racist comments.

> Interviewer: Are there still students who make degrading comments to you?
>
> Ubah: Yes, a matter of fact there are.
>
> Interviewer: Who are those people?
>
> Ubah: There is this group, called the pack group, which call me the N-word and say ‘go home to your home country’. Sometimes I just ignore them, but sometimes I get angry and respond. /…/. (Individual interview)

The immigrant students are positioned as *the Other* by their exposure to degrading and racist comments by the pack group. Everyday racism at the school is manifested through comments about the immigrant students’ national origin and the colour of their skin (cf. Essed, 1991). These specific practices performed by the pack group create structural inequalities both at an individual level, by being directed to specific students, and at an institutional level because they have become part of the everyday life in school for certain students (cf. Essed, 2002).

Fighting Back

The stories of Omed, Hussein and Ubah reveal that the racist comments they are exposed to have a great impact on their everyday life in school. When reflecting upon his situation in school, Omed expresses frustration, not only because he gets upset and angry about the degrading comments but also because it has resulted in continuing fights with the students who are mocking him and his friends.

Interviewer: What was it like to move from a big city in Kurdistan to the small village of Granberget?

Omed: It was hell. It was really hard because of all the fights. When you are young you don't know how to handle things and I ended up having problems with the social services and the police.

Interviewer: Did you have problems when there were people mocking you?

Omed: Yes, a lot. /…/ You know, there were several people who came up to us and started to fight, but when the police arrived, we ended up having problems, not the Swedish guys.

Interviewer: Okay, so it was you and your friends who ended up having problems with these guys?

Omed: Yes.

Interviewer: So, were there fights between your gangs or what?

Omed: Yes, there were always fights, yes, every time. /…/ Well, we're not a gang we're only three people [Omed, his brother Barzan and his friend Hussein]. (Individual interview)

When Omed continues to reflect upon the whole situation he says that fighting back has only caused problems for him, not only with the pack group, but also with the social services and the police. Being able to come to school without ending up in fights, and being able to concentrate on his school work and plan for a better future are things that he considers important.

Omed: There are a lot of people who want to fight with me. Sometimes I feel safe [in school], but sometimes not because of this. I do not want to fight in the ninth grade, because it now is the time when I have the chance to change my future [to continue to upper secondary school] /…/ Like last time, it was a week ago actually. The racists came up to me when I was sitting outside in the corridor and I was playing a game on my mobile phone and a guy just came up to me and hit me. That made me so angry because I hadn't done anything. When stuff like that happens now in the ninth grade I don't want to come to school, because I don't want to cause problems. I was stupid to get involved in trouble and that made the trouble come back and that was no good.

Interviewer: So, now you want peace and quiet, to feel safe in school and be able to concentrate on your school work so you will have the opportunity to continue to upper secondary school and you don't wish to have any more problems with the social services and police?

Omed: Exactly. (Individual interview)

Similar to Omed's, Hussein's story also reveals frustration about the tensions between the three immigrant boys and the pack group who repeatedly provoke them. The student who was expelled for a while eventually came back to school and, according to Hussein, he continues to mock the three boys.

Hussein: A few days ago, he wanted to cause problems again.

Interviewer: Again?

Hussein: Yes.

Interviewer: The same guy?

Hussein: Yes. He came up to my friend, he is Kurdish. He looked at my friend and he was just like 'Why are you looking at me'?

Interviewer: Do you mean Omed?

Hussein: No, his brother Barzan, but he looked at Omed too, he looked at them, 'bitch gazing' [bitchblick in Swedish] you know. And he asked, 'What do you want?' 'Nothing, I can look if I want to.' And he was just like, 'Why are you looking then?' And he just replied, 'I can look whenever I want.' He says, 'Don't look at me,' but why is he looking at me like that? /…/ Don't look at me then. And he said, 'Do you want to fight or what?' He was just, 'Hit me then' and then other students got really angry and I just stopped it.

> He wants to make us hit him so he will have a reason to call all his older friends. They'll come here after school, and we really hate that, because they are like 16 people jumping on one person, can you believe that? Would anyone manage that by themselves? /…/ They are really cowards until they call for their older friends who are over 18 years.

Interviewer: Are you scared?
Hussein: No, not anymore. Well I was never scared because I was beaten by that guy, but I was upset.
Interviewer: Right, you were upset. What makes you feel unsafe in school?
Hussein: Well, there are still people who don't accept me as just as an ordinary guy.
Interviewer: Because you are from Syria?
Hussein: Yes. (Individual interview)

Also, Hussein's story is framed from the continuing tension between the pack group and the immigrant boys. Hussein also expresses awareness about the existing structural inequalities in school (cf. Essed, 2002). Due to his immigrant background, some of the students do not accept him the way he is – 'as just as an ordinary guy'. As a result, according to Hussein, he and his friends are positioned as *the Other* and exposed to racist name-calling by the pack group.

Positioned as the Other

In this chapter we have addressed everyday systemic racism in a Swedish rural lower secondary school. As highlighted in the introduction of this chapter, everyday racism within an educational setting is not only a micro-phenomenon, but rather acts that have to be understood in close relation to what is going on in society at large. Looking at previous educational research, we can see that studies on everyday racism in Swedish rural schools are more or less absent in educational research (cf. Odenbring & Johansson, 2019a, b). Given this, the current study provides new insights into how students with various immigrant backgrounds experience everyday racism in school and being positioned as *the Other*. Also, importantly, this study gives this group of students a voice.

The students' narratives reveal that it is a particular group of students at the investigated school, referred to as 'the pack group', that exposes immigrant students to different forms of degrading and racist comments. This so-called pack group mainly consists of boys. Compared to what has been recognized in previous research (Odenbring & Johansson, 2019b), the everyday racism at Amber School has not become normalized and part of the local school culture among the students with majority background. At Amber School, several of the students with majority background expressed that they opposed the racist comments expressed by the pack group. They also expressed their sympathy and support towards the immigrant students.

The results indicate that immigrant students, regardless of gender, were exposed to racist and degrading comments due to their immigrant background or the colour of their skin. During the interviews, the narratives of the immigrant boys also revealed that the everyday racism was expressed through physical violence.

According to the boys, the pack group provoked them in different ways to start fights. For one of the boys in particular, Omed, this has caused a lot of problems because he has ended up in many fights. Looking back and reflecting upon his situation, Omed expresses frustration because he wants to change this pattern and to be able to focus on his school work and on his future. The boys' narratives also intersect with masculinity and reveal what could be categorized as a double exposure: (1) the pack group is causing them problems they want to avoid and (2) they want to be accepted just the way they are.

One aspect of performing masculinity and constructing a certain form of masculinity is expressed through the physical violence the boys are exposed to or the fights that they are involved in. They have to physically fight back when the pack group is mocking them. Another dimension is the homophobic name-calling and being called 'gay'. This form of verbal insult could be understood in the light of positioning the immigrant boys as less 'manly', but also a way for the pack group to keep the immigrant boys 'in their place' so to speak (cf. Essed, 2013; Kimmel, 2001; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Pascoe, 2013). The micro-aggressions expressed by the racist comments and also the physical violence directed to the immigrant students had a great impact on their well-being in school.

Preventing Everyday Racism in Schools

In the Swedish curriculum of the compulsory school, democratic values, understanding and compassion for others are stated as fundamental values on which the Swedish educational system is to be based. Any forms of discrimination – such as discrimination on the grounds of ethnic affiliation, religion or other belief system – should be actively combated by school professionals (Skolverket, 2018). In the curriculum it is also recognized that Sweden is a multicultural country and a place with inhabitants from various places around the world.

> The internationalisation of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place high demands on the ability of people to live with and appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity. Awareness of one's own cultural origins and sharing in a common cultural heritage provides a secure identity which it is important to develop, together with the ability to understand and empathise with the values and conditions of others. The school is a social and cultural meeting place with both the opportunity and the responsibility to strengthen this ability among all who work there. (Skolverket, 2018, p. 5)

Yet, looking at both the results of the current and previous studies, racial micro-aggressions take many forms. For the individual person, this may have a great impact on their everyday life and well-being, as Kohli and Solórzano (2012) argue: 'The impact of racism does not end once the experience is over' (p. 447). Similarly, Essed (2013) argues that 'The insistence on the right to offend in the name of freedom, regardless of its impact on others, nurtures disgraceful behavior' (p. 74). This, we argue, raises several questions around how school professionals can proactively prevent racial micro-aggressions and everyday systemic racism. Discussing these issues with students and making them aware of the impact such words may have on the person who is exposed to this might be one way of approaching this matter. Also, developing methods and models to validate different cultures could be another way of highlighting multicultural education, preventing racism and creating awareness (cf. Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Looking at everyday racism and entitlement racism from a wider and a global perspective, it is important to take racism and the constant struggle against racism seriously (cf. Apple, 2009). In the age of the internet, the voice of entitlement racism becomes borderless due to its accessibility through social media 24/7 (Essed, 2013). This means that confronting racism has to take place on many frontiers.

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